

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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****ADVISORY – Important Information****

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TO: Academic; Child Care; Maine Emergency Management Agency; Healthcare; Laboratories; Media; Public Health; Emergency Medical Services; Regional Resource Centers; and Maine Homeless Shelters

FROM: Dora Anne Mills, M.D., M.P.H., Public Health Director

SUBJECT: Pertussis Outbreak in Hancock County

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Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
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Pertussis Outbreak in Hancock County

Background

Since January 9, 2009, eight cases of pertussis have been reported in individuals ranging from 9 to 50 years of age in the Blue Hill and Brooklin areas of Hancock County. The outbreak involves an elementary school, a middle school, and a worksite. A number of symptomatic contacts have been identified in Hancock County and are undergoing diagnostic testing. There is no evidence that this outbreak is directly related to the recent outbreak of pertussis reported in York County.

Pertussis is a highly communicable, vaccine-preventable disease that can last for many weeks. It is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory secretions of infected persons. Symptoms include cough, paroxysms, whoop, and post-tussive vomiting.

Recommendations

1. Consider pertussis when evaluating a patient with an acute illness characterized by prolonged cough, or cough with paroxysms, whoop, or post-tussive vomiting. Infants may present with apnea and/or cyanosis.
2. Persons who exhibit symptoms consistent with pertussis should be tested for pertussis with a nasopharyngeal swab. The State Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL) tests specimens by culture and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) (http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/etl/micro/download_forms.htm). Serologic testing has not been well standardized and is not recommended.
3. Individuals with suspected pertussis should be treated after specimens are collected for testing. Their close contacts may benefit from antibiotic prophylaxis. The federal CDC guidelines for treatment and prophylaxis for pertussis are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5414a1.htm>.
4. Individuals with symptoms of pertussis should be considered to be infectious and should not attend school, work, or daycare or participate in recreational activities until they have completed five days of an appropriate antibiotic treatment. This is especially important for persons working in medical settings or with infants and young children.
5. Children under age 7 should be up-to-date for pertussis immunization. Also, consider vaccinating persons 10-64 years of age with the Tdap vaccine. In an outbreak setting, Tdap may be given 2 years after the last Td booster.
6. Report known or suspected cases of pertussis to the Maine CDC at 1-800-821-5821.